

## THE TREMONT OPERA HOUSE OF GALVESTON: THE FIRST YEARS\*

THE little "cotton rich" city of Galveston was the first municipality of the South to show marked signs of recovering from the devastating effects of the Civil War. Civic minded business men of the town began at once to make efforts to establish a theatre that would prove in every manner as attractive to their inland customers as the amusement places of New Orleans. The season of 1868-69, the first under the direction of Henry Greenwall, and one of the most satisfactory in Galveston stage annals, encouraged the promoters of the successful venture to give serious thought to the erection of a theatre building. The movement initiated by the fathers of this enterprise became the genesis of the Tremont Opera House, the most notable playhouse ever built in Texas.

By the end of February, 1871, playgoers of the city knew that a commodious opera house had at last become a reality. Willard Richardson and his associates had put up a fine structure, modern in all its appointments, at a cost of \$150,000.<sup>1</sup> The building occupied a space sixty-five by one hundred fifty feet at the corner of Tremont and Market streets, an area that included the site of the old Neitch's and the later Greenwall opera houses. The lower story was of iron, and the upper of brick, with iron lintels and sills. An elaborate cornice of galvanized iron and a French mansard roof were outwardly perhaps the most conspicuous features of the theatre. The grand entrance, twenty-five feet in width, was on Market street, and led up to a spacious lobby (twenty-two feet by thirteen feet) on the second floor. The

\* A paper prepared for delivery before the Texas State Historical Association.

auditorium, exclusive of the stage, took in an area of fifty-five feet eight inches by sixty-five feet. The stage, "in all its appointments an exact counterpart of Booth's in New York," extended the entire width of the building and was thirty-nine feet nine inches deep, with a proscenium arch forty-five feet in width. The scenery, mounted on rubber rollers, and all machinery for stage operations, were in imitation of similar installations at Booth's. Footlights of white, red, and blue made possible interesting scenic effects. The drop curtain was the work of Signor Arrigoni, an Italian artist of European as well as American reputation.

"Chairs, similar to those at Booth's," declared the *Galveston News* (February 25, 1871), "are so arranged that when the auditor rises to depart, the seat is thrown out of the way to afford space for the amplest drapery to pass out unruffled."

Greenwall Brothers and Prince were the lessees, and Vining Bowers, the stage manager. The orchestra of seven pieces was under the direction of Richard Maddern of the Varieties theatre of New Orleans.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic company of the New Galveston Theatre, as it was first called, was given as follows: Vining Bowers, A. Hoyt (Dolly) Davenport, T. J. Hind, M. C. Daly, J. A. Burns, Frank Evans, E. A. Eberle, Joseph Gobay, G. A. Mortimer, George Jordan, Jr., Miss Augusta L. Dargon, Mrs. E. A. Eberle, Miss Mattie Maddern, Miss Annie Tyson, Miss Emma Cline, Miss Frankie McClellan, Mrs. M. C. Daly, Miss Kate Tyson. Messrs. Eberle, Davenport, Bowers, and Hind were actors known in all the principal cities of the country; and Miss Augusta Dargon, Irish tragedienne, whose talents had been discovered by Horace Greeley, was an actress of national reputation.

Before the rise of the curtain (Saturday, February 25, 1871) Miss Dargon read a poetical address by George Denison Prentice, Louisville poet and journalist. The poem had

been written for, and spoken by, Miss Dargon at the dedication of a Louisville theatre in 1867. Except for a reference to a waterfall, the composition was peculiarly fitting to the Galveston occasion and locale.<sup>3</sup> The opening play was *The School for Scandal*, with Miss Dargon as Lady Teazle, Mr. Eberle as Sir Peter Teazle, T. J. Hind as Sir Oliver Surface, and A. H. Davenport as Charles Surface. Miss Dargon, the *News* thought, made a slight change in the "traditional business at the denouement in the screen scene." The journal, however, disavowed any intention of stating with certainty what the accepted business was; but did add that "those on the left side of the house could get a much better glimpse of the little French milliner." Frankie McClellan gave an even, quiet, and unobtrusive rendition of Maria, a performance that was declared wholly free of the air of an old stager. Mr. and Mrs. Eberle (Sir Peter Teazle and Mrs. Candour) showed their usual firm grasp of their roles.

A few lines from the account of the play in the *News* are quoted:

Mr. T. J. Hind, as Sir Oliver Surface, did a splendid piece of scholarly acting that bore marks of study. Vining Bowers as Crabtree gave all his words with the flavor of acetic acid. Bowers delivers sentences with a coloring of expression and a rotundity of enunciation that will make him a favorite every where. The gay, rollicking Dolly Davenport was, of course, at home as Charles Surface. (We will remark right here—that with the exception of Mr. Bowers and Mrs. Eberle, all pitched their voices too high.)

Bulwer Lytton's *Money* followed on the 27th, with Frank Evans presenting Alfred Evelyn with "less of the impetuosity, less of the passion and less of the fickleness" than the *News* critic was accustomed to see the character endowed with. He was depicted as well bred and polite, but by no means a polite gentleman—in fact, pretty much as Bulwer

# OPENING NIGHT

OF THE

## New Galveston Theatre

LESSEES, GREENWALL BROS. & PRINCE.

The date of opening being decided upon, the Lessees beg respectfully to state, the improvement made have been with a view to the comfort and convenience of the public. Every portion of the Theatre, in front of the Curtain, has been arranged with the intention of combining perfect ventilation, strength and beauty, while on the stage the same motives have governed.

All the modern improvements, introduced of late upon the French and English Stage, will be brought into requisition with the design of giving completeness to the dramatic productions, which it is the Managers' wish shall be worthy the patronage of Galvestonians. With this "Opening" the Management have arranged the

### DATE OF OPENING,

Saturday Evening, February 25th, 1871.

The Performance will be inaugurated by an

#### Overture, "LE CHEVAL DE BRONZE," Aubey.

The Orchestra, during the Evening, will perform the following:

SELECTIONS FROM ERNANI.....	VERDI
ANVIL POLKA.....	PARLON
QUADRILLE, "SICILY".....	D'ALBERT
POLKA, APOLLONIA, (Cornet Solo).....	BOSQUET

After which MISS AUGUSTA L. BARGON will read

#### A POEM,

Written by the late GEO. D. PUENTICK, Esq.

To be followed by the sparkling Comedy, in 5 Acts, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, entitled the

## SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL!

### OBSERVE THE CAST:

SIR PETER TEAZEL.....	MR. E. A. EBERLE
SIR OLIVER SURFACE, (From Edwin Booth's Theatre, New York).....	T. J. HIND
JOSEPH SURFACE, (From Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York).....	FRANK EVANS
CHARLES SURFACE, (From New York and New Orleans Theatres).....	A. H. DAVENPORT
CRABTREE, (From New York and New Orleans Theatres).....	VINING BOWERS
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, (From Varieties Theatre, New Orleans).....	JOSEPH GOBAY
MOSES, (From the New York Theatre).....	M. C. DALY
TRIP.....	GEORGE JORDAN, Jr.
BOWLEY.....	G. A. MORTIMER
CARELESS.....	JOHN A. BURNS
SNAKE.....	G. GILBERT
LADY TEAZEL, (From New York Theatres).....	MISS AUGUSTA L. BARGON
MARIA, (From Niblo's Garden, New York).....	MISS FRANKIE MCCLELLAN
LADY SNEERWELL.....	MRS. E. A. EBERLE
MRS. CANDOUR.....	MISS ANNIE TYSON
LADY SNEERWELL'S SERVANT.....	MISS KATE TYS
SURFACE'S SERVANT.....	From Varieties Theatre, N. O.

GALVESTON NEWS STEAM PRINT.

From a programme in the Harvard Theatre Collection.



had conceived him. The same critic found Miss Dargon's management of the death scene in *Camille* (February 29) "very tasteful—not long enough to be painful, as it sometimes is." He declared that her rendition of the consumptive prostitute was the best thing she had done—and he was speaking thus of a drama he had previously said he could not abide—"with its weepings, its sighs, its groans, its spasmodic contortions, and its horrible and revolting cough."

The company's revival of Tom Taylor's *Our American Cousin* (March 6, 7) was generously attended and deservedly commended. Said the *News*, in speaking of the first night's presentation of the play:

Mr. Bowers drew his Asa Trenchard from a Western model—a sharp-willed, go-ahead American man of business, one who loves to make money but has no soul for hoarding it. Mr. Bowers does not do what so many actors do, mistake the character of Asa Trenchard, and make him a narrow contracted Yankee. It was once the writer's fortune to discuss this character with Charles Gaylor, the author [*sic*], and we know that Mr. Bowers' conception was his idea of the character.

Mr. Davenport's Lord Dundreary was not, as was R. Dorsey Ogden's, a rehash or copy of Edward Askew Sothern's; it was in many respects an original conception, with more of life. It is very difficult for the actor to get all the gross exaggeration the character of Lord Dundreary requires—without sliding over into burlesque, which spoils it.

Mr. Eberle made a character of the miserable drunken Coyle, and deserves mention for it.

Miss Dargon, as Florence Trenchard, was inimitable. She certainly played the character as finely as ever Laura Keane did—and better than it was last played here by Nelly Johnson, an excellence that we had not anticipated, but which was nevertheless true.

Miss Dargon's Meg Merrilies (March 10) drew praise from the *News*. "It is certainly as good as the Meg Miss Cushman gave us when the first played the part; it is not so good as

the Meg she played at retirement." The actress was commended for her effective reading of the lines:

Bertram's right,  
And Bertram's might  
Shall meet on Elangowan's height.

So many people, the paper went on to say, pull their rimes out of their mouths "as if they were poetical tape cut in equal lengths."

When Tom Taylor's *Ticket of Leave Man* was played on March 14, it was recalled that four of the members of the Galveston (Great Star) Company had been in the cast of the play when it was originally produced at the Winter Garden in 1863. They were Messrs. Bowers, Davenport, Eberle, and Hind. In the Galveston presentation the whole play passed off with "exceptional grace." Dolly Davenport,<sup>4</sup> as James Dalton, "made a perfect villain." Bowers as Green Jones was declared so fresh and natural that it seemed as if he had drawn the character directly from the slums of New York.

One of the most notable pieces of the company's varied repertory of sensations, standard drama, popular melodrama, and Shakespearean tragedy was Mrs. Susanna Centlivre's *The Wonder, A Woman Keeps a Secret*, which play was offered on March 29. *The Wonder* was long a favorite of David Garrick's, and the jealousy-driven Felix was the last part the actor was seen to perform on any stage.<sup>5</sup> "For the first time," said the *News*, in speaking of the Galveston presentation, "we ask for a repeat. Reasons? *The Wonder* is the best comedy the management have placed before us." The journal also added that the company played it better than any other comedy they had attempted. *The Wonder*, a drama of "gallant intrigue," was called elegant, witty, and delicate, rather than gross and vulgar, as so many light plays of the time were. "There are passages a little . . . latitudinal,

and some double *entendres*, that are inseparable from the plot, or rather plots, for there are enough in it to furnish half a dozen modern operas."

Miss Dargon, as Violante, "filled every just demand of the occasion," most delightfully developing the special points. One of these followed the finding of Flora in the clothes-press; here Violante's easy change from diplomacy to dignity and scorn that came after the discovery was admirably effected. Violante had come to the house of Frederick, a merchant friend of her betrothed Felix, with the idea of convincing the doubting gentleman that there is "a delicacy in love that equals even a religious faith." In the midst of her pleading, Flora, who had been concealed by the scheming servant Lissardo in the clothes-press, runs out—with her face covered. The discovery is a turn of fortune that Violante quickly sees is to her advantage.

*Violante.* Hal a woman concealed! very well, Felix.

*Felix.* A woman in the press!

*Enter Lissardo.*

How the devil came a woman there, sirrah?

*Lissardo.* What shall I say now?

*Violante.* Now, Lissardo, shew your wit to bring your master off.

*Lissardo.* Off, madam—Nay, nay, nay, there, there needs no great wit to, to, to bring him off, madam, for she did, and she did not come, as, as, as, a, a, a, many may say directly to, to, to speak with my master, madam.

*Violante.* I see by your stammering, Lissardo, that your invention is at a very low ebb.

*Felix.* 'Sdeath! rascal, speak without hesitation, and the truth too, or I shall stick my stiletto in your guts.

*Violante.* No, no, your master mistakes; he would not have you speak the truth. (Act III.<sup>6</sup>)

The *News* critic, evidently feeling that he was familiar with the text of the play, called the Tremont stage manager's attention to an "error" in his prompt-book: "Certainly a lady



of such elegance as Mrs. Centlivre would never have put a vulgarism like *dad* in the mouth of her heroine." But that is precisely what Mrs. Centlivre had done; the speech which includes the objectionable vulgarism is subjoined.

*Violante.* I'll send her to you.—I must watch if Dad be still asleep, or here will be no room for Felix. (Act II.<sup>7</sup>)

Surprisingly, Felix (Frank Evans), one of Garrick's best parts, appeared to arouse little enthusiasm in Galveston. Next to Miss Dargon's *Violante*, interest was divided equally between the parts of the two servants, Lissardo (Mr. Bowers) and Flora (Miss Cline).

The Lady Macbeth of Augusta Dargon (April 1) caused the *News* to comment that the actress's assumption of the role was in the Frances Ann (Fanny) Kemble tradition. The portrayal was widely at variance with the prevailing "Bowery tough" Charlotte Cushman interpretation, which at that period was still considered a supreme effort of histrionic genius. The journal commented on the actress's presentment of the role:

Miss Dargon has the same general conception of the character that Mrs. Kemble entertained. The Kemble theory: Lady Macbeth had not so much a malignant desire to shed blood and commit wickedness as an utter indifference to the fact of crime. Nowhere that we could see, in all of Miss Dargon's acting was there a single evidence of remorse, which was in perfect keeping with the theory, for a mind in that condition could not suffer remorse. . . . At one moment in the banquet scene Miss Dargon gave way to a heart-sinking—for Lady Macbeth was a tender woman. Miss Dargon was right in doing this.

Augustin Daly's *Under the Gas Light* was put on the stage after elaborate preparations and offered for an entire week, starting April 10. The S. R. O. sign was hung up for the first time in the Tremont's history. The larger stage, the new machinery, and the competent work of scenic artist Charles

Evans made the production possible. The Hudson River and Jersey City were seen "by moonlight, with many boats moving here and there in water."<sup>8</sup> *Under the Gas Light* was the play at Henry Greenwall's benefit (on which occasion Greenwall, of course, received the total night's "take"), April 27. The largest audience ever assembled in Galveston saw Vining Bowers, in behalf of the citizens, present the beneficiary with a diamond ring and cross valued at \$750. Greenwall, a better theatre manager than orator, with halting speech and blushes, accepted the tokens of esteem.

Miss Dargon chose Henry Hart Milman's Italian tragedy, *Fazio*, for her benefit on May 5, at which time she gave "a splendid performance to a splendid house"; and Mr. and Mrs. A. H. (Dolly) Davenport (Mrs. Davenport had been, until a few days before, Frankie McClellan) elected, perhaps fittingly, *She Stoops to Conquer* for their benefit. The season, the most successful in the history of the Galveston stage, closed on May 17.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Season of 1871-1872*

Vining Bowers, who would serve again as stage manager, Eugene Eberle, Joseph Gobay, and Mattie Maddern were among the stock company members of the previous season who elected to remain in Galveston for another year. Some of the new players were E. T. Nichols, W. J. Ferguson (who was playing at Ford's theatre when Lincoln was killed), Charles J. Fyffe, F. R. Donald, J. V. Melton, Paul Rutledge, George Chapman, J. C. Heybourne, Alice Brooks, Jennie Bryant, Emma Whittle, Isabella Arnold, Jennie Clifford, May Roberts, Miss De Forrest, Marie Livingston, and Mrs. M. L. Berrell. Richard Maddern continued as orchestra leader.

Madame Marie Methua-Scheller, celebrated German ac-

tress and first scheduled star of the Tremont's star-studded season, was detained in New Orleans by the "tiresome quarantine" and therefore could not show her lovely Rosalind as billed on September 20.<sup>10</sup> After a few days' delay, the curtain went up instead for the first time that season on the stock company's version of *Othello* (the 23rd), with Charles J. Fyffe, Jibbenainosay specialist, scintillating as the Moor. C. T. Nichols did a fairly creditable Iago, and Alice Brooks was none too successful as Desdemona. Tremont patrons finally got to see Madame Methua-Scheller on October 11 in August Waldauer's adaptation of Denner's *La Grâce de Dieu*, called *The Pearl of Savoy*. She then played in succession Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, Josephine in *The Child of the Regiment*, and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, choosing Lorie for her benefit on October 20. The last play was Augustin Daly's adaptation for Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's *Dorf und Stadt, oder die Frau Professorin*, which had been the first dramatic offering in the player's career as an English-speaking star, in New York in 1864. E. A. Eberle of the Green-wall stock company, who assumed the part of Dr. Emanuel, had acted the same role with Madame Scheller at the time of her first appearance with Daly. A large auditory at the Tremont found the Madame's personation of the innkeeper's daughter, Lorie, "inimitably true to nature and yet without the least approach to anything commonplace or insipid." Also as Lorie, with the four songs the part called for, Madame Scheller was able to display to advantage the fine qualities of her sweet contralto voice.

Leona Cavender came on October 23rd, with *Minnie's Luck*, written expressly for her by the very able author of burlesques, John Brougham. Following Miss Cavender was W. Horace Lingard, with the two pretty sisters, Dickie Lin-

gard (Harriet Dunning) and Alice Dunning, and many of Lingard's Theatre Comique company. *Naval Engagements* (October 30), billed as a "fine old English comedy," was their opener. *Frou Frou* (November 3), called a perfect triumph, drew their biggest house. Dominick Murray, who had played Boucicault's *Arrah na Pogue* two hundred times in London, offered his Irish repertory for Galveston's approval for a week, beginning November 6.

The outstanding event of the season was the "great engagement" of Edwin Forrest. The famous player, somewhat enfeebled in body, had, at the time of his visit to Galveston, hardly more than a year to live. During his stay he played most of his best known roles. Of his Richelieu (November 27 and December 2) the *News* spoke interestingly.

We know of no other actor who places the character so nakedly upon the stage. It is utterly barren of all the adjuncts of costume, of situation and of tableau. The grand old man, subtle in his intellect, wonderful in his foresight, tender in his affection, magnificent in his power and grim in his dry humor, is depicted by the single art of declamation. His performance is one of instinct. Mr. Forrest betrayed none of that fierce guttural tone which common criticism assigns to him. His whole character manifests rather than suggests great feebleness.

*King Lear*, which Forrest gave four times (the last two days of November and December 8 and 9) was declared a performance of great beauty, the *News* finding that the petulant old king was still the actor's greatest character. ("I act Hamlet and Richelieu," the actor once had said, "but, by God, I *am* Lear!") Madame Methua-Scheller, who had played with Forrest in New York, performed Cordelia with great nicety and judgment. Of his Hamlet it was said simply that Forrest followed Hamlet's advice to the players—a statement that can be construed as great praise. Mme.

Methua-Scheller's Ophelia was evenly balanced throughout. Vining Bowers, who had been first grave-digger hundreds of times to some of the best Hamlets on the boards, did his old part flawlessly.

The tragedian's Othello was called a faithful portraiture of a symmetrical whole, not a performance merely of *points*. Forrest's powerful physique and an organ-toned voice, as well as mental equipment, admirably fitted him for parts that called for great vigor, like Lear and Othello. There was never any mistaking Forrest's Moor for "a little black boy, like Pompey with a tea-kettle, fretting and fumbling about the stage," as James Quin sarcastically remarked of Garrick.<sup>11</sup> Forrest himself had said that any journalist who could find fault with his third act of *Othello* was a man fit only for the lunatic asylum.<sup>12</sup>

Mrs. J. A. Oates, the Alice Oates of later burlesque fame, appeared (December 13) in *The Fair One With the Blond Wig*, in which play young William H. Crane, as Prince Huckabuck, made his bow before the Galveston public. Crane was supporting this beautiful star of delightful voice at a salary of \$50 a week.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Oates sang the song, *The Harp of Tara's Halls*, so touchingly that the *News* asked that *The Fair One* be repeated. In *The Flower Girl of Paris*, a burlesque of such operas as *Lucia* and *Il Trovatore* (December 14), the star was not especially successful.

Mrs. F. S. Chanfrau, an actress of wide fame since her one-hundred nights of Ophelia to Edwin Booth's Hamlet in 1864, presented *Dora*, a Tennyson adaptation, on December 18. The actress was found particularly appealing in C. W. Tayleure's emotional drama, *Expiation*, with which she closed. A news account spoke of how completely she displayed a mother's tenderness in the last act of the piece:

. . . And at the very last, just before the dip of the curtain, when the performer, kneeling, raised her eyes heavenward, she certainly accomplished one of the finest stage effects, whilst she threw herself into one of the most graceful, beautiful and expressive dramatic attitudes we have seen on the boards anywhere.

The "local" of the *News*, with distractions of more import elsewhere, found little time for Mrs. D. P. Bowers' visit. This versatile woman of forty-two, formerly manager of the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, made her Texas debut, January 1, in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Mrs. Bowers's most notable performance was probably that on the third: the title role in *Mary Stuart*. The account of her in this drama of Schiller throws interesting light on the performance.

Of the title role, its rendition by Mrs. Bowers was a most respectable display of tragic talent. Her voice, one of strength, depth and rich smoothness, became the part, while her personal gifts suited the royal representation. She wept gracefully, and like a queen, her occasional bursts, now of haughty passion, then of regal despair, were natural, affecting, even grand. Probably about the best of her acting was in the scene with Elizabeth before that of the execution, wherein she made a fine display of royal scorn and defiance.

The actress ended a successful two weeks with *Ingomar* on January 13.

Henry Greenwall took a benefit on January 24, with George M. Cohan's father Jerry, of the Abbott Pantomime Combination, among the entertainers for the night. The quarantine, the bad weather, and the scarcity of money had deprived the manager of expected profits. The benefit was a success, even though hundreds who had bought tickets remained away because of the stormy weather. The excessive cold, which showed no signs of moderating, forced the management to close the theatre after Edwin Adams, well known young tragedian, had played for three days. Adams,

with a "horrid head cold," tried *Hamlet* (January 29); the player was a man of fine physique, was graceful and earnest, "intense in passion, and without the slightest disposition to the heresy of rant." He essayed his tour de force, *Enoch Arden*, on the 31st, but the inclemency of the weather kept the audience away.

The weather was a bit less severe when Joe Jefferson presented his *Rip* on February 5. It was the great comedian's first appearance in the city since 1846, when, as a boy of sixteen, he came in with his mother and sister Cornelia. His keen and subtle sense of humor was praised, and, despite the wet night, the house was filled. He was seen as Mr. Gollightly in the comedy, *Lend Me Five Shillings*, and as Hugh de Bras in the farce, *A Regular Fix*, at his benefit on the 9th. He ended his six-day visit with another showing of *Rip* on Mardi Gras Day, February 13.<sup>14</sup>

After a four-year wait Galveston came in for its share of the nation-wide excitement over the British Blondes when Lydia Thompson gave *Blue Beard* on February 19. The performer had made her debut in this country on October 5, 1868, at Wood's Museum, New York, in the burlesque named *Ixion*; and had since become pretty generally known in the land as an able dispenser of her particular form of entertainment with "its allurements of blond wigs, shapely forms and vocal velvet."<sup>15</sup> Miss Thompson, "saucy, blue-eyed, golden-haired and of elegant figure" and Pauline Markham "who . . . comes as near a personal realization of the goddess of loveliness as one can expect in mortal woman,"<sup>16</sup> disported their entrancing figures before crowded houses every night of their engagement. The *News* noted that up to March 2, during the twenty-eight weeks and four days the company had been out from New York, Miss Thompson's share of re-

ceipts from performances was \$111,684.40, with a net profit of \$64,751.00. After tendering the Greenwall brothers a benefit on March 2, Miss Thompson concluded her engagement. Henry Greenwall himself left to assume the management of the Lena Edwards Theatre in New York.

The last star of this season of luminaries of great magnitude was the renowned Czech tragedienne, Madame Fanny Janauschek. The actress came before March ended and rested while the public marvelled at her \$11,000 ear drops and \$16,000 Mary Stuart cross on display at Thompson's Jewelry store. A crowded house witnessed her superb rendition of Mary Stuart (April 1), the *News* commenting that she made none of those sudden transitions—the delight of the gallery—"which we have seen in the performances of Mrs. D. P. Bowers." The same critic found her Lady Macbeth (April 3) hard to evaluate: "It was the first picture we have ever seen of a lost soul—of a soul that neither hopes nor cares for salvation." The noted player was seen also in another of her great European successes, *Medea*, the audience at this play, as at all other of her performances, finding no difficulty with her German accent.

A small Italian opera company of solo artists performed the chief arias, duets, and trios of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Traviata*, and *Lucretia Borgia*, in a short season starting April 16. Giovanni Reina, Enrico Nicolini, and Mmes. Mariotti and Corani were singers of the troupe.

Charles J. Fyffe, the new manager of the Tremont, to introduce himself fittingly to the public, brought to the city on April 29 the revolutionary ballet spectacle, *The Black Crook*. By an arrangement with David Bidwell of New Orleans, the whole aggregation, including the renowned premiere danseuse, Marie Bonfanti, was brought to Galveston. Miss Bon-



fanti entranced with her famous shadow dance, the "finest and best divertissement in her repertory." There was in the piece also the March of the Amazons (a series of formations performed by handsome females in jaunty hunting costumes), as well as dazzling "transformations."<sup>17</sup> But the thing was just too big a dose of pulchritude for the Islanders. After two or three full houses, there simply were not enough wicked males left to absorb any more of the radiance emanating from these creatures of shapely form and shadow. As a consequence, the venture proved unprofitable.

The first two seasons—among the most notable in the Tremont Opera House history—served to establish the place of an institution of importance in the culture of the city. In the twenty-three years of the theatre's life as an active amusement house, most of the notable opera and stage figures of the time appeared before its footlights. John McCullough, Edwin Forrest's heir as an exponent of the grand style, was the favored star at the Tremont in Mardi Gras week for many years. Edwin Booth visited the house three times, the first in the winter of 1882, on which occasion he stayed for a solid week to appear in all the pieces of his repertory. On December 23, 1886, Adelina Patti made on the Tremont stage the only Texas appearance of her entire career. Here often came Mrs. Minnie Maddern Fiske, and James O'Neill with his *Monte Cristo*; and Nat Goodwin, most celebrated comedian of his era, and De Wolf Hopper and Francis Wilson, great musical comedy clowns; and Helena Modjeska, Polish actress of renown; and Mrs. John Drew (reputedly the best Mrs. Malaprop of all times), her son John (on his only tour in the provinces), and Maurice Barrymore, father of John, Ethel, and Lionel. Lawrence Barrett visited with many a strong company; and here came also Otis Skinner, Sol Smith Russell (portrayer of the simple country boy), Roland

Reed (known for his *cheeky* reporter characterizations), Stuart Robson (incomparable Shakespearean clown), and Lotta, song and dance artist, "the greatest barnstormer of them all."

Producers of "tank dramas" (a peculiar variety of spectacle that required hundreds of gallons of "real" water in a canvas tank on the stage) and of all sorts of "sensation" pieces found the mechanical equipment of the Tremont ample for the proper satisfaction of their demands; it was on this stage, in fact, that William A. Brady scored the initial success of his managerial career with the resurrected spectacle of thrills, *After Dark*.

The venerable old playhouse is now but a memory to the few who know its history. On the walls of the modern business structure that occupies the memorable site there might be inscribed appropriately a passage from the poetical address of George Dennison Prentice. The work was read by Augusta Dargon on the theatre's opening night.

A modest temple rose upon this spot,  
Devoted to the Drama's noble art—  
To give amusement and to touch the heart,  
To wield at will with passion's strong control,  
To mould the feelings, to exalt the soul,  
To kindle thoughts allied to hope and fear,  
To wake Joy's smile and holy Pity's tear.

J. S. GALLEGLY

## APPENDIX

### List of Attractions

The New Galveston Theatre (Tremont Opera House):

1870-71

F 25 The School for Scandal. F 27 Money. F 28 Everybody's Friend.  
F 29 Camille. Mr 1 Everybody's Friend; Mr. and Mrs. Peter White.  
Mr 2 London Assurance. Mr 3 She Stoops to Conquer; The Young

Widow. Mr 4 The Hunchback; The Wandering Minstrel; The Widow Hunt; Everybody's Friend. Mr 6, 7 Our American Cousin. Mr 8 Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady; Pocahontas. Mr 9 The Serious Family; Pocahontas; Lucretia Borgia; The Stage Struck Tailor. Mr 13-15 The Ticket of Leave Man. Mr 17 Lucretia Borgia; The Stage Struck Tailor. Mr 18 Camille; Ireland As It Is; The Wandering Minstrel. Mr 21 The Lady of Lyons. Mr 22 Russian Concert Troupe; The Hunchback; The Swiss Swains. Mr 23 East Lynne. Mr 24 Everybody's Friend; Nipped in the Bud. Mr 25 East Lynne; La Tour de Nesle. Mr 27 The School for Scandal. Mr 28 The Marble Heart. Mr 29 The Wonder. Mr 30 Meg Merrilies. Mr 31 Our American Cousin. Ap 1 Naval Engagements; Barney the Baron; Macbeth. Ap 3 The Victims. Ap 4 The Wonder. Ap 5 La Tour de Nesle. Ap 6 The Belle of the Faubourg. Ap 7 East Lynne. Ap 8 Oliver Twist. Ap 10-14, 15 (2) Under the Gaslight. Ap 17 Eustace Baudin. Ap 19 Katherine and Petruchio; La Sonnambula (burlesque). Ap 20, 22 Katherine and Petruchio; La Sonnambula (burlesque). Ap 22 Meg Merrilies. Ap 24 Fernande. Ap 26, 27 Under the Gaslight. Ap 28 Deborah. Ap 29 Fernande; Lucretia; La Sonnambula. My 1 Toodles; Sailor of France; Turning the Tables. My 2 Deborah; Two Buzzards. My 3, 4 Black Eyed Susan; The Honey-moon. My 5 Fazio. My 6 Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady; Macbeth. My 8 Caste; Pocahontas. My 9 Romeo and Juliet. My 10 She Stoops to Conquer. My 12 A Quiet Family. My 14 The Stranger. My 17 London Assurance. My 22 Barber of Seville. My 23 Lucia de Lammermoor. My 26 La Dame Blanche; Rigoletto. My 29 Guillaume Tell. My 31 Mignon.

### Tremont Opera House: 1871-72

S 23 Othello; The Rough Diamond. S 24-O 11 The Widow Hunt; Caste; Under the Gaslight; An Object of Interest; Colleen Bawn; The Lost Ship. Methua-Scheller: O 11 The Pearl of Savoy; The Lady of Lyons; The Child of the Regiment; Romeo and Juliet. O 20 Lorie. Leona Cavender: O 30 Naval Engagements; Marriage at Any Price; Delicate Ground; Who's to Have Him; Una; Day After the Wedding. David Garrick: N 3 Frou Frou. N 4 Elfie, or The Cherry Tree Inn. Dominick Murray: N 6 Arrah na Pogue. N 7 Rapparee. N 8 The Fight for the Championship. N 9 Colleen Bawn. N 10 The Golden Bubble; Mickey Free. N 13, 14 Checkmate; Cinderella. N 15, 16 Aladdin, the Wonderful Scamp. N 17 Don Giovanni (burlesque); Little Amris. N 18 The Quiet Family. N 20 The Forty Thieves. N 21 Sarah Young Man. N 22 Pluto, the Magic Lyre. N 24 Margot, the Poultry Dealer; Fra Diavolo. Edwin Forrest: N 27 Richelieu. N 28 Virginus. N 24, 30 King Lear. D 1 Jack Cade. D 2 Richelieu. D 4 Hamlet. D 5 Jack Cade. D 6 Othello. D 7, 8 King Lear. Oates: D 13 The Fair One With the

Blonde Wig. D 14 The Flower Girl of Paris. D 15 Little Faust. Mrs. Chanfrau: D 18, 19 Dora. D 20 Expiation. D 23-26 Oates Opera Troupe. Mrs. Bowers: Ja 1 Lady Audley's Secret. Ja 3 Mary Stuart. Ja 4 Macbeth. Ja 5 Lady Audley's Secret. Ja 6 Mary Stuart; Lucretia Borgia; Catherine and Petruchio. Ja 8 The Hunchback. Ja 9 Leah, the Forsaken. Ja 10 Mary Stuart. Ja 11 East Lynne. Ja 12 Meg Merrilies; The Jealous Wife. Ja 13 Leah, the Forsaken; Ingomar. Abbott Pantomime: Ja 15 Humpty Dumpty; The Three Hunchbacks. Ja 16-24 The Three Hunchbacks; Mother Goose; Humpty Dumpty. Ja 25 Colleen Bawn. Ja 26 Our American Cousin. Ja 27 The Streets of New York; Toodles. Edwin Adams: Ja 29 Hamlet. Ja 30 Wild Oats. Ja 31 Enoch Arden. Joseph Jefferson: F 5-8 Rip Van Winkle. F 9 Lend Me Five Shillings; A Regular Fix. F 10 (2) Rip Van Winkle. F 12 Miriam's Crime; The Wandering Minstrel. F 13 Rip Van Winkle. Lydia Thompson: F 19-Mr 2 Blue Beard; Lurline; Kenilworth; Les Brigands; Sinbad; Joan of Arc. Wyndham: Mr 11 Saratoga. Mr 12 The Lancers. Mr 13 Divorce. Mr 14 Caste. Mr 15 Divorce. Mr 16 The Bonnie Fish Wife; Ours. Mr. 21 London Assurance. Mr 22 Progress; Divorce. Joseph K. Emmett: Mr 24-30 Fritz, Our Cousin German; Carl, the Musician; Carl and Fritz. Janaushek: Ap 1 Mary Stuart. Ap 2 Deborah. Ap 3 Macbeth. Ap 5 Fazio. Ap 6 Mary Stuart. Ap 11 Medea. Ap 29-My 4 The Black Crook.

## NOTES

1. The plans for the theatre were drawn by the late T. H. Adams and completed by F. S. Stewart. Hugh Prichard was the builder. *Galveston News*, February 25, 1871.
2. Richard Maddern was an uncle of Mrs. Fiske, and Mattie Maddern was his daughter.
3. *The Poems of George D. Prentice*, ed. John James Piatt (Cincinnati, 1876), pp. 213-16.
4. The real name of the actor was Adolphus Davenport Hoyt. He had made his debut as Paul Pry at the Baltimore Museum in 1848. In 1857 he and his wife, Lizzie Weston (whom he had married three years previously), were divorced under scandalous circumstances. Miss Weston soon married the British actor, Charles James Mathews. *New York Herald*, October 29, 1857.
5. Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, two vols. (London, 1808), Vol. II, Chap. LII, 348.
6. Susanna Centlivre, *The Wonder, A Woman Keeps a Secret* (London, 1714), p. 39.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
8. Such spectacles, or "sensations," soon came to be called "tank dramas," and were exceedingly popular until quite beyond the turn of the century.

9. "The Hon. Horace Greeley has accepted an invitation and will honor the Theatre with his presence this evening." These words appear on a Perkins Theatre (Houston) playbill, May 23, 1871. (Playbill in Harvard Theatre Collection.)
10. On September 23 (according to an item in the *News*), Madame Scheller had been detained at Humboldt, Tenn., by a "smash up" on the railroad.
11. *Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian* (London, 1804), p. 113.
12. Lawrence Barrett, *Edwin Forrest* (Boston, 1881), XIII, 154.
13. W. H. Crane, *Footprints and Echoes* (New York, 1927), VI, 54.
14. It was announced that the Tremont Opera House company would shortly make a tour of the state. Vining Bowers had resigned as stage manager on February 12.
15. H. P. Phelps, *Players of a Century* (Albany, 1880), XXVII, 381.
16. George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York, 1927-1945), VIII, 437.
17. The "transformation" was a kind of dramatic spectacle produced by lighting effects that involved a brilliant and dazzling change of scene; as, for example, the bewildering metamorphosis of a witches' cave into a fairy palace.